

Al were it so that she hem longe taried;
And ye shul understonde how that he
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she.
But natheles, whan they were knyght infere,
They lyved in joye and in felicitye,
For ech of hem hadde oother lief and deere,

Save o thyng, that she wolde nevere assente,
By no wey, that he sholde by hire lye
But ones, for it was hir pleyn entente
To have a child, the world to multiplie;
And al so soone as that she myghte espye
That she was nat with childe with that dede,
Thanne wolde she suffre hym doon his fantasye
Eft soone, and nat but oones, out of drede.

And if she were with childe at thilke cast,
Na moore sholde he pleyen thilke game
Til fully fourty dayes weren past;
Thanne wolde she ones suffre hym do the same.
Al were this Odenake wilde or tame,
He gat na moore of hire, for thus she seyde,
It was to wyves lecherie and shame
In oother caas, if that men with hem pleyde.

Two sones by this Odenake hadde she,
The whiche she kepte in vertu and lettrure;
But now unto our tale turne we.
I seye, so worshipful a creature,
And wys therwith, and large with mesure,
So penyble in the werre, and curteis eke,
Ne moore labour myghte in werre endure
Was noon, though al this world men sholde seke.

Hir riche array ne myghte nat be told,
As wel in vessel as in hire clothyng;
She was al clad in perree and in gold,
And eek she laste noght, for noon huntynge,
To have of sondry tonges ful knowyng,
Whan that she leyser hadde, and for to entende
To lerne bookes was al hire likyng,
How she in vertu myghte hir lyf dispende.

And, shortly of this storie for to trete,
So doughty was hir housbonde and eek she,
That they conquered manye regnes grete
In the orient, with many a faire citee
Apertenaunt unto the magestee
Of Rome, & with strong hond held hem ful faste;
Ne nevere myghte hir foomen doon hem flee,
Hy whil that Odenakes dayes laste.

Hir batailles, whoso list hem for to rede,
Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo,
And how that al this proces fil in dede,
Why she conquered, and what title therto,
And after of hir meschief and hire wo,
How that she was biseged and ytake,
Lat hym unto my maister Petrark go,
That writ ynough of this, I undertake.

Whan Odenake was deed, she myghtily
The regnes heeld, and with hire propre honde
86

Agayn hir fooms she faught so cruelly,
That ther nas kyng ne prynce, in al that londe
That he nas glad, if he that grace fonde,
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye;
With hire they maden alliance by bonde
To been in pees, and lete hire ride and pleye.

The emperour of Rome, Claudius,
Ne hym bifore, the Romayn Galien,
Ne dorste nevere been so corageous
Ne noon Ermyyn, ne noon Egipcien,
Ne Surrien, ne noon Arabyen,
Within the feeldes that dorste with hire fighte
Lest that she wolde hem with hir handes slen,
Or with hir meignee putten hem to flighte.

In kynges habit wente hir sones two,
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,
And Hermanno, and Thymalao
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.
But ay fortune hath in hire hony galle:
This myghty queene may no while endure
fortune out of hir regne made hire falle
To wrecchednesse and to mysaventure.

Hurelian, whan that the governaunce
Of Rome cam into his handes tweye,
He shoope upon this queene to doon vengeance,
And with his legions he took his weye
Toward Cenobie, and, shortly for to seye,
He made hire flee, and atte last hire hente,
And fettred hire, and eek hire children tweye,
And wan the lond, and hoom to Rome he wente.

Amonges othere thynges that he wan,
Hir chaar, that was with gold wrought and perree,
This grete Romayn, this Hurelian,
Hath with hym lad, for that men sholde it see.
Biforen his triumphe walketh shee
With gilte cheynes on hire nekke hangyng;
Corouned was she, after hir degree,
And ful of perree charged hire clothyng.

Allas, fortune! she that whilom was
Dredeful to kynges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth al the peple on hire, alas!
And she that helmed was in starke stoures,
And wan by force townes stronge, and toures,
Shal on hir heed now were a vitremyte;
And she that bar the ceptre ful of floures
Shal bere a distaf, hire cost for to quyte.

NOBLE, o worthy Petro, glorie of
Spainc,
Whom fortune heeld so hye in
magestee,
Wel oghten men thy pitous deeth
complayne!
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,
And after, at a seege, by subtiltee,
Thou were bitraysed and lad unto his tente,
Wheras he with his owene hand slow thee,
Succedyng in thy regne and in thy rente.

The feelde of snow, with thegle of blak therinne,
Caught with the lymerod, coloured as the gleede,
He brew this cursednesse and al this synne.
The wikked nest was werker of this nede;
Noght Charles Olyver, that ay took heede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Harmorike
Genylon Olyver, corrupt for meede,
Broghte this worthy kyng in swiche a brike.

WORTHY Petro, kyng of Cipre,
also,
That Alisandre wan by heigh
maistrye,
ful many an hethen wroghtestow
ful wo,
Of which thynne owene liges hadde envye,
And, for nothyng but for thy chivalrye,
They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe.
Thus kan fortune hir wheel governe and gye,
And out of joye bryng men to sorwe.

Of Melan, grete Barnabo Viscounte,
God of delit, and scourge of Lumbardy,
Why sholde I nat thyn in fortune acounte,
Sith in estaat thou clombe were so hye?
Thy brother sone, that was thy double allye,
For he thy newew was, and sone-in-lawe,
Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye;
But why, ne how, noot I that thou were slawe.

Of the erl Hugelyn of Pyze the langour
Ther may no tonge telle for pitee;
But litel out of Pize stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prisoun put was he,
And with hym been his litel children thre;
The eldeste scarsly fyf yeer was of age.
Allas, fortune! it was greet crueltee
Swiche briddes for to putte in swiche a cage!

Dampned was he to dyen in that prisoun,
for Roger, which that bisshope was of Pize,
hadde on hym maad a fals suggestioun,
Thurgh which the peple gan upon hym rise,
And putten hym to prisoun in swich wise
As ye han herd, and mete and drynke he hadde
So smal, that wel unnethe it may suffice,
And therwithal it was ful povre and badde.

And on a day bifil that, in that hour,
Whan that his mete wont was to be broght,
The gayler shette the dores of the tour.
He herde it wel, but he ne spak right noght,
And in his herte anon ther fil a thought
That they for hunger wolde doon hym dyen.
Allas! quod he, alas! that I was wrought!
Therwith the teeris fillen from his eyen.

His yonge sone, that thre yeer was of age,
Unto hym seyde, fader, why do ye wepe?
Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage,
Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
I am so hungry that I may nat slepe;
Now wolde God that I myghte slegen evere!

Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe;
Ther is nothyng, save breed, that me were levere.

Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,
Til in his fadres barm adoun it lay,
And seyde, fader, I moot dye,
And kiste his fader, and dyde the same day;
And whan the woful fader deed it say,
for wo his armes two he gan to byte,
And seyde, Allas, fortune! and weylaway!
Thy false wheel my wo al may I wyte!

His children wende that it for hunger was
That he his armes gnaw, and nat for wo,
And seyde, fader, do nat so, alas!
But rather ete the flessch upon us two;
Oure flessch thou yaf us, take oure flessch us fro,
And ete ynogh. Right thus they to hym seyde,
And after that, withinne a day or two,
They leyde hem in his lappe adoun, and deyde.

Hymself, despeired, eek for hunger starf;
Thus ended is this myghty Erl of Pize;
from heigh estaat fortune away hym carf.
Of this tragedie it oghte ynough suffice.
Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille,
That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
fro point to point, nat o word wol he faille.

ALTHOUGH that Nero were as vicious
As any feend that lith in helle adoun,
Yet he, as telleth us Swetonius,
This wyde world hadde in subjeccioun,
Bothe est and west, south and
septemtrioun;
Of rubies, sapphires, and of peerles white,
Were alle his clothes brouded up and doun;
for he in gemmes greetly gan delite.

Moore delicaat, moore pompous of array,
Moore proud, was nevere emperour than he;
That ilke clooth, that he hadde wered o day,
After that tyme he nolde it nevere see.
Nettes of gold, threed hadde he greet plentee
To fasshe in Tybre, whan hym liste pleye.
His lustes were al lawe in his decree,
for fortune, as his freend, hym wolde obeye.

He Rome brende for his delicacie;
The senatours he slow upon a day,
To heere how men wolde wepe and crie;
And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.
His mooder made he in pitous array;
for he hire wombe slitte, to biholde
Where he conceyved was; so weilaway!
That he so litel of his mooder tolde.

No teere out of his eyen for that sighte
Ne cam, but seyde, A fair womman was she!
Greet wonder is how that he koude or myghte
Be domesman of hire dede beautee;
The wyn to bryngen hym comanded he,